

“BISHOP AND PAWN FORFEIT RULE”
(a comedy sketch idea by Jonathan D. Steinhoff, 10/20/07)

[KASPAROV is playing a game of chess with PUTIN in an upper-class living room.]

PUTIN: Well, Kasparov, I suppose you are wondering why I wished to meet with you.

KASPAROV: Ah, but it was I who arranged that we meet.

PUTIN: I do not believe I quite understand. You did receive my invitation to get together for a polite game of chess, is that not what we are doing here?

KASPAROV: Precisely what I wanted for you to think. But would you ever have invited me, had I not placed my beautiful wife diagonally across from you at the reception last night, just as my knight is now diagonally across from your rook?

PUTIN: Might it not be that it was I who lured your knight into its current position, Kasparov?

KASPAROV: Right, right, right, sure, fine. Okay, why did you ask me here, according to you?

PUTIN: Oh, nothing.

KASPAROV: Oh, nothing. **(there is silence as they concentrate on the game)**

PUTIN: You know, Kasparov, you will never defeat me.

KASPAROV: You are obviously not referring to this game of chess.

PUTIN: Correct.

KASPAROV: Ah, but I shall defeat you. I shall defeat you because I am a good man and you, are a bad man.

PUTIN: I see, so all is that simple.

KASPAROV: So, are you planning to kill me then, as you kill all who stand up to you?

PUTIN: Now really, Kasparov.

KASPAROV: Is your plan.... to strangle me with your own two hands, as you did to Pyotr Bentonoski, when you were only sixteen years old?

PUTIN: How did you – I did no such thing.

KASPAROV: Of course not.

PUTIN: Let me tell something to you, Garry Kasparov. Sometimes everything depends on the smallest, tiniest details. You should be very careful.

KASPAROV: This is information for you to know.

PUTIN: Permit me to tell you a story. It is a story about my ancestral lineage, going all the way back to England in the Sixth Century.

KASPAROV: So, you possess English blood, then? You are to tell me you are a descendant of the legendary King Arthur?

PUTIN: No, no, not at all. However, yes, this story does involve King Arthur, or rather, King Arthur's favorite bishop who would later become a saint, Bishop Kentigern. I will tell of a time, exactly November 3rd, year 509, when many people in England gathered together just to hear this bishop speak. People actually traveled hundreds of miles to be there, including, my great-great-great, well, an ancestor of mine, Vladimira Higgins –

KASPAROV: Does not sound very English.

PUTIN: Vladimira Higgins. She traveled for days just to hear this Bishop Kentigern. But then, with everyone there, he did not even show up.

KASPAROV: Why not?

PUTIN: He just did not feel like it, changed his mind, that is all. And so Vladimira, she was so upset, instead of going back home to her English family, she decided to go all the way to Russia, where she met my great-great-great, my ancestor, Fyodor Putin. And if it had not been for Bishop Kentigern not showing up, I, well, they would never have met, and I would never have been born.

KASPAROV: What a shame that would have been.

PUTIN: Of course, I can tell you, Garry Kasparov, because, I know you do not have a time machine, and so you can do nothing about this. Ha-ha-ha! But if not for this one thing, Bishop Kentigern not showing up, I would not be here.

KASPAROV: Ha-ha-ha, I, uh, of course I do not have a, uh, a time machine. Just as, uh, well, just as you do not have, uh, an inflatable, life-size Ahmadinejad doll that you sleep with every night! Ha-ha-ha!

PUTIN: I, uh, of course I uh, I do not have an inflatable, life-size Ahmadinejad doll that I, uh, sleep with, not every night, I mean, of course I do not have that. Just as you, of course, do not have a, uh, an inflatable, life-size chess queen doll, that you sleep with every night.

KASPAROV: Of course I, uh, I, uh, do not have one of those. Well Vladimir, it was nice talking with you and playing chess. You must now leave, as I am busy.

PUTIN: Yes, I must leave and am busy too. Goodbye.

KASPAROV: Goodbye.

(Both men being somewhat anxious, PUTIN hastily leaves. The instant PUTIN leaves, KASPAROV pulls open a drape, revealing an inflatable, life-size chess queen doll. KASPAROV takes a device from his pocket and holds it up as if to show the chess queen doll.)

KASPAROV: Did you hear that, my chess queen? Putin does not even begin to suspect that I do in fact have a time machine! Ha-ha! So.... all I have to do, is to keep Vladimira Higgins from ever meeting Fyodor Putin, in the Sixth Century. Hmmm....

[A special effect transition indicates that KASPAROV has traveled back in time, a chyron indicating that it is the Sixth Century. KASPAROV is playing chess with BISHOP KENTIGERN in an upper-class Sixth Century living room.]

KASPAROV: Well, Bishop Kentigern, what do you think?

BISHOP KENTIGERN: 'Bout what?

KASPAROV: Do you not see how, perhaps, one in your position should want to move the bishop all the way over here (**motions with his hand**), so to be surrounded by all of these fine, wonderful pieces?

BISHOP KENTIGERN: I don't see that at all. My bishop would get captured if I moved it over there.

KASPAROV: Yes, well, it WOULD have been a good move, if we had not set up the board with the queen next to the rook and the pawns in the back row, so that when I moved my....

BISHOP KENTIGERN: My dear Kasparov, that is how one sets up a chessboard.

KASPAROV: Maybe here in the stupid Sixth Century! That is not how WE do it!

BISHOP KENTIGERN: 'Scuse me?

KASPAROV: Nothing, fine, have it your way.

BISHOP KENTIGERN: Ah, look, checkmate! I win again!

KASPAROV: Checkmate, fine. You only won because of these stupid chess rules you have.

BISHOP KENTIGERN: I notice how you keep arguing with me about the chess rules, Kasparov, almost as if you don't quite know how to play.

KASPAROV: Oh, I know how to play! It is these rules of yours - fine, nevermind. Another game.

[There is another transition, the chyron saying, "Four Chess Games Later", underneath which it says, "(Kentigern 4, Kasparov 0)".]

KASPAROV: Gee, that sure would be a good move for you, Bishop Kentigern, if you were to move your bishop over there with all of those other pieces. Yes indeed, a bishop like that is far better off surrounded by all of those pieces over there, which came from very far away.

BISHOP KENTIGERN: You must be forgetting the rule, about how if I move my bishop for two consecutive moves, my next three moves have to be rook moves. That would go very badly for me. Not trying to make me lose, are we?

KASPAROV: Your next three moves would have to be rook moves? No, no, that is the most ridiculous rule in the world! Who is it that plays chess like this? You want to move your bishop to be with all these pieces here, see, see? Okay, enough! (**KASPAROV** suddenly knocks the chessboard and chess pieces off the table and begins strangling **BISHOP KENTIGERN**.) You are going to do what I am telling you, in my subtle way by talking about your chess bishop! You are going to go to that thing where everyone is gathering to hear you speak, and then, so after that Vladimira Higgins will not want to travel to Russia, and then she will never meet Fyodor Putin, and then Vladimir Putin will never be born! And that is all there is to it!

(When **KASPAROV**'s tantrum is over, he finds that **BISHOP KENTIGERN**'s body has grown limp in his hands, he has strangled **BISHOP KENTIGERN** to death, and someone can be heard pounding on the door. **KING ARTHUR** and **MERLIN** enter the room through the front door.)

KING ARTHUR: Oh my God! What's happened?

KASPAROV: I am sorry, your royal highness, King Arthur, if only you had gotten here, even one minute sooner. I have lost control and strangled Bishop Kentigern to death, just as Vladimir Putin strangled to death Pyotr Bentonoski with his two bare hands when he was but sixteen years old.

KING ARTHUR: You hear that, Merlin? Just when I had removed the obstacle that was preventing Bishop Kentigern from appearing before all those people who are traveling hundreds of miles to hear him speak.

KASPAROV: You have done what? That is wonderful. No, wait....

MERLIN: What ever made you want to strangle Bishop Kentigern? He was such a decent fellow.

KASPAROV: Oh. Well, you see, Putin would never have been born in the 21st Century had Vladimira Higgins and Fyodor Putin never met, back in the Sixth Century, so I positioned myself where I could block them from meeting, but their meeting was being guarded by these stupid chess rules that you have, which made me defend chess, by attacking Bishop Kentigern, which means Bishop Kentigern won't be alive to, which positions Vladimira Higgins, so then they WILL meet, and so....

MERLIN: (smiling understandingly) I understand. Same thing happened to me once.

KING ARTHUR: Whatever the reason, you will have to answer for your crime in court.

KASPAROV: It is not needed for you to not bother. I will just go home and strangle myself to death in the 21st Century.

MERLIN: Won't that be a neat trick.

KASPAROV: Yes, I am going to strangle myself, exactly five minutes before I would have sent myself back here to the Sixth Century, so that way none of this will ever have happened, no strangling, and so Bishop Kentigern shall be able to speak to all of those people, thus checkmating Putin by making him never be born.

MERLIN: So then why don't you just destroy your time machine exactly five minutes before you came here? That's what I'd do. Might work.

KASPAROV: I have not the heart. My time machine invention, it is, it is almost as wonderful as.... as the game of chess itself. My time machine MUST live on. That reminds me, I must be sure to lock my door so no one finds it after I am dead. My inflatable, life-size chess queen can guard it. Nevermind, I did not say that. And so now, it is back to the 21st Century and strangling myself.

(With a sad smile, KASPAROV takes his device out of his pocket, aims it at himself, and vanishes out of the room.)

KING ARTHUR: You know, we would have gotten here five minutes sooner, in time to save Bishop Kentigern, if it hadn't of been for that small, bearded peasant chopped down that tree right in front of our carriage. What was his name?

MERLIN: I think he said it was, Akmanidou, Akmanijob. Sorry, I can't pronounce it, your highness.

KING ARTHUR: Ahmadinejad.

MERLIN: Yeah, that's it.

KING ARTHUR: And then there was that new man working in the stables, insisting we take the carriage instead of just riding our horses here. We could have just jumped over the tree in the road if we'd been riding our horses. Never should have listened to him.

MERLIN: Adolph, his name's Adolph.

KING ARTHUR: Right, Adolph. Don't you think there's something funny 'bout him, you know, with that strange way he shaves his mustache?

MERLIN: Got a funny way of saluting, too, he does.

KING ARTHUR: Yeah.

MERLIN: So.... A game of chess?

KING ARTHUR: Sure, why not.

MERLIN: And let's each forfeit a bishop, in honor of Kentigern on the floor there.

KING ARTHUR: Forfeit one bishop each, in honor of Kentigern on the floor.

MERLIN: Let's each forfeit a pawn as well.

KING ARTHUR: And a pawn.

THE END